

Members

Rep. Charlie Brown, Chairperson  
Rep. Linda Lawson  
Rep. Dan Stevenson  
Rep. Ralph Ayres  
Rep. Daniel Dumezich  
Rep. Dean Mock  
Sen. Sue Landske, Vice-Chairperson  
Sen. Joseph Zakas  
Sen. Ron Alting  
Sen. Rose Antich  
Sen. William Alexa  
Sen. Earline Rogers  
William Pemberton  
Duane W. Dedelow



# **NORTHWEST INDIANA TRANSPORTATION STUDY COMMISSION**

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Authority: P.L. 149-1999

## **MEETING MINUTES<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>September 13, 2001</b>
<b>Meeting Time:</b>	<b>1:00 P.M.</b>
<b>Meeting Place:</b>	<b>Executive Classroom, Purdue University-North Central-Valparaiso Academic Center, 600 Vale Park Road</b>
<b>Meeting City:</b>	<b>Valparaiso, Indiana</b>
<b>Meeting Number:</b>	<b>2</b>

**Members Present:** Rep. Charlie Brown, Chairperson; Rep. Linda Lawson; Rep. Dan Stevenson; Rep. Ralph Ayres; Sen. Joseph Zakas; Sen. Ron Alting; Sen. Rose Antich; Sen. William Alexa; Sen. Earline Rogers; William Pemberton.

**Members Absent:** Rep. Daniel Dumezich; Rep. Dean Mock; Sen. Sue Landske, Vice-Chairperson; Duane W. Dedelow.

Representative Brown, the Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m. He stated that the topics of testimony before the Commission today would be high speed rail, the Regional Transportation Committee of Lake County, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, and State Road 49 issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

## 1. High Speed Rail

Rogers Sims, P.E., gave the presentation on this topic of study requested by Senator Landske. He informed the Commission that the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative is a cooperative, multi-agency effort to develop a nine state (Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin), 3000 mile regional passenger rail system. Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration also are participants in the initiative. Its goal is to meet future regional travel needs through significant improvements, by a "hub and spoke" passenger rail system, and with increased train frequencies. Air travel is less cost effective than rail travel and there has also been a decline in intercity bus services. The proposed trains could go up to 110 miles per hour on three primary routes serving Indiana (Chicago-Cincinnati, Chicago-Cleveland, and Chicago-Louisville). When in service, the time between Chicago and Cincinnati would be almost halved, and the proposed frequency of service would go from one train per day to six.

In response to a question from Senator Antich, Mr. Sims replied that the lines would branch off around Alida (LaPorte County). Senator Zakas expressed his desire that the northern route go to South Bend rather than to Ft. Wayne, and Mr. Sims stated that the determination would be made through reviewing potential ridership and interest. He stated that at a recent outreach meeting in Ft. Wayne, 400 were in attendance. In answer to a question from Senator Alexa, Mr. Sims concurred that the timeline of construction commencement in 2002 was possibly too aggressive.

Larry Goode, Chief of the Planning and Intermodal Division of the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) informed the Commission of the seven outreach meetings around the state (Gary, South Bend, Ft. Wayne, Lafayette, Indianapolis, Lawrenceburg, and Clarksville) on this issue; all have been held except for one that was postponed in Lafayette. (A copy of information furnished by INDOT concerning the Long Range Plan is provided as Exhibit A.) The outreach meetings consist of presentations about the Midwest Rail Initiatives (to which INDOT contributes funds), and then questions and answers from the audience. He stated that crossing safety is a big issue; the gates are designed with four sections so a vehicle cannot get through the gates. Currently, crossing analysis work is underway, and digital aerial photography of the corridors is being performed, allowing preliminary engineering to be drawn to scale. INDOT is closely following the progress of the federal high speed rail funding initiatives. Representative Brown requested copies of the presentation to be provided to the Commission. Representative Ayres asked how many stops are proposed between Indianapolis and Gary; Mr. Goode told the Commission that there is only one, at Lafayette, as the object is to keep the speed up.

## 2. Regional Transportation Committee (Lake County)

Dr. Dennis Rittenmeyer, President of Calumet College of St. Joseph, furnished the Commission with the Report of the Lake County Regional Transportation Committee. (A copy of the report is provided as Exhibit B.) This Committee's recommendations will be presented to the Lake County Council on September 19. About thirty presentations on this subject have been made in the last few months. The Committee believes that regional transportation is in northwest Indiana's best interest. The Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council, with members from Lake, Porter, and LaPorte counties, has passed a resolution supporting the creation of a Lake County regional transportation authority, which this Report recommends. Studies show that Lake County has poor usership of the current available public transportation but the 1990 census showed that 12.5% of households had no vehicle. Studies also show that only 23.3% of the transit demand in the three county area is being met.

In order to meet transportation needs, it is proposed that Lake County should have a regional transportation authority, to be funded by a 1% food and beverage tax. In the last few years, with the gaming industry becoming stronger in Lake County, this has become a possible funding option. He stated that eleven counties have a food and beverage tax. (A copy of a newspaper article regarding the food and beverage tax given to the Commission is provided as Exhibit C). However, the proposed food and beverage tax would not provide sufficient funding for existing and expanded commuter rail service. It is hoped that in the future a three or four county authority that assists commuter rail service may be formed and that a funding source might be a food and beverage tax in these other counties. Dr. Rittenmeyer does not believe that the proposal from the Committee goes far enough, but that it is the first step for pulling together a regional transportation authority, and for providing the means to fund it.

### 3. Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)

Dan Gardner, Deputy Director of the NIRPC, spoke regarding the Vision 2020 Plan update. (A copy of the information furnished to the Commission is provided as Exhibit D.) The Plan includes both INDOT and local projects. There are two factors that constrain the Plan: fiscal and severe non-attainment for air quality. NIRPC selects projects in urbanized areas, and several recent projects included improving the Borman Expressway, the Ridge Road corridor, and 93rd Avenue. Safety improvements and congestion are paramount. Most of the Plan is concerned with improving intersections and re-surfacing. In response to a question from Senator Antich, Mr. Gardner commented on a few projects on the list that are completed.

Senator Rogers asked if there is an impact with respect to the current economic position of the state; Mr. Gardner asked Kathy Noland of INDOT, who was in attendance, to check on construction status and get that information to the Commission's staff for distribution. In answer to a question from Representative Ayres, Mr. Gardner said that NIRPC has no control over interchanges v. stoplights - that is a design determination.

### 4. State Road (S.R.) 49 Issues

Kathy Noland of INDOT introduced Chief Engineer Richard Smutzer, also of INDOT. Mr. Smutzer furnished the Commission with a memorandum concerning the reconstruction of S.R. 49 (a copy of the memorandum is provided as Exhibit E), and with a chronology of earlier history of S.R. 49 (a copy of the history is provided as Exhibit F). Mr. Smutzer and INDOT LaPorte District Engineer Norm Wilhelm informed the Commission of the history of the construction of this section of highway, completed between 1987 and 1988 and opened in 1989. As early as 1991, cracking of the concrete pavement occurred. It was thought that the subbase, although meeting state standards, was pulverized by the traffic vibrations. Maintenance efforts to the highway were performed between 1994 to 1998, and the road was resurfaced in 1999. After that time, INDOT tried to crush the old surface into rubble that would be used as the base for a new layer of asphalt. In attempting to perform that action, two separate machines were used that were unable to properly compact the road, and rain further hampered the project. A decision was made to tear out the entire road and rebuild, increasing the cost of the project from \$12 million to \$18 million dollars, and delaying the completion for almost a year. The northbound lanes should be open November 1, and construction on the southbound lanes should begin about April 1 of 2002 and be finished by August 15, 2002.

Both Senator Antich and Representative Ayres asked why there was no warranty required from the contractors. Mr. Smutzer explained that INDOT does not require that on every project. Ms. Noland told the Commission that with the problems that existed on this

project, that the chances of finding a contractor who would warrant the repair were almost nonexistent because no one could guarantee the surface underneath.

Questions and concerns then followed from the audience concerning past communication with INDOT and the contractors. Concerns raised included the sufficiency of barriers to the highway and that S.R. 49 has more accidents than the norm. After discussion, Senator Rogers asked that questions from the public regarding this project can be addressed to INDOT and submitted to the Legislative Services Agency staff for delivery.

The fourth meeting of the Commission was set for October 25, 2001 at 1 p.m., at a location to be announced. The meeting was adjourned at 3:33 p.m.